

The Double Dealer

The Secret Surrender
by Allen W. Dulles.
Harper & Row, 288 pp., \$5.95

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John F. Kennedy concluded after the Bay of Pigs that the reappointment of Allen Dulles as Director of the CIA had been a mistake. We are told, however, that he still could not understand how a man so intelligent and so experienced could be so wrong.¹ Dulles's account of his part in arranging the surrender of German armies in Italy sixteen years earlier offers important clues; it also illuminates the way in which Dulles helped set in motion the events that we know as the Cold War.

This is not his intent, of course. Dulles was wartime boss Chief in Switzerland. During March and April 1945 a leading Nazi in Italy, ss General and *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff got in touch with him. Dulles's book is a detailed account of how this "contact" was used to facilitate the surrender of German forces in Italy a few days before V-E Day. The publisher promises the book will convey "the breathless excitement of a fictional thriller." However, it contains no sex, little sadism, only an occasional episode, in the woods at a Swiss villa. There is excitement in this tale, but to sense it one must know a good deal more than Dulles tells about its bearing on the great issue of 1945: whether the World War II alliance could be followed by peaceful relations among the Great Powers.

Hitler was sure it could not, and, of course, in the end he was right. Convinced that disputes between the Allies could save the Third Reich, he and his subordinates tried to foment trouble during the last months of the war. His underlings maneuvered both to curry personal favor with the Americans and British and to save Germany from the Russians. Wolff made his approaches to Dulles in Switzerland. Wolff's ss boss, Himmler, suggested a deal to Count Bernadotte: "In order to save as great a part of Germany as possible from a Russian invasion I am willing to capitulate on the Western Front in order to enable the Western Allies to advance rapidly towards the east." This bait was offered all over Europe; the trouble, of course, lay in the hook, and Dulles knew it: "It would have been a simple matter for the Germans to let

word leak to the Russians that some secret negotiations were going on . . . that the Allies were running out on them."

IT WAS A "REAL DANGER." Yet it was a risk Dulles was willing to take; he begged Washington to let nothing interfere with his efforts to produce the surrender of a million men. Washington was dubious. The Germans had been ordered to fight to the last man. Talk of surrender was high treason, and Hitler was hanging Generals on the slightest evidence of insubordination. The only result of bargaining talks would be to arouse Soviet suspicions. So Dulles's first request for permission to open a channel to the Germans was refused.

Dulles was not put off. More to the point, his chief "unofficial" assistant in such matters, a naturalized citizen of German origin, was "not the kind of man to give up easily." Dulles trusted Gero von S. Gaevernitz, and he especially trusted Gaevernitz's judgment of the Nazis. Gaevernitz (who did much of the work on Dulles's book) seems to have made the most of his favored position to urge the wisdom of dealing with Wolff. An alibi was soon devised to cover Dulles in Washington. He would be able to say that he was "only trying to arrange a prisoner exchange"; and Gaevernitz and Dulles tentatively opened communications with Wolff.

Dulles chose an inopportune moment; for the Nazi interest in these talks seemed to confirm known Nazi designs at the time: American and British armies were racing into Germany from the West, while the best units Hitler could muster were being deployed against the Red Army. Hitler's tactics added meaning to Churchill's warning that "the Russians may have a legitimate fear of our doing a deal in the West to hold them back in the East." (Probably Churchill's main aim was to avoid giving Stalin an excuse for making separate surrender deals elsewhere in Europe.) As Dulles's communications with Wolff went forward, the Prime Minister felt that in order to eliminate Soviet suspicions, the Russians would have to be allowed to participate.

On March 8, 1945 Dulles met

Wolff. The Russians, however, were not invited, and all hell broke loose. Ambassador Harriman was treated to a blast of Molotov's temper: "The Soviet Government sees not a misunderstanding, but something worse . . ." Stalin cabled directly to Roosevelt that, on the basis of these talks, the Germans were moving three divisions from Northern Italy to the Soviet front! Roosevelt replied that Dulles was merely opening a channel of communications; if and when surrender discussions took place, the Soviet Union would be represented. Now the Russians were incredulous. Stalin replied that his advisers were certain surrender talks had taken place; they believed they had already produced an agreement "to open the front to the Anglo-American troops and let them move east."

We do not know, specifically, whether the Nazis used Dulles's talks to divert troops to the east, or to divide the Allies by spreading this fear; nor does Dulles enlighten us much on either point. He admits that Wolff spent two suspicious periods with Hitler and Himmler in Berlin during the course of the talks, but for the most part Dulles is content to take Wolff's word that he was acting in good faith. That the talks had the profoundly grave effect Hitler desired, however, is now beyond doubt. Their effect was made far more serious at precisely this time by British tactics on the Polish issue, which, quite unlike Churchill's approach to surrender talks, were so violently anti-Soviet that Roosevelt felt London was "perfectly willing for the United

States to have a war with Russia at any time and . . . to follow the British program would be to proceed to that end."

DULLES DOESN'T TELL US much about this either, but it is not too much to say that the suspicions arising from these events in early 1945 set in motion the first important hostilities of the Cold War.² Stalin raised major doubts that the alliance would be transformed into a postwar organization by announcing that Molotov would not come to the April 25, 1945 San Francisco U.N. Charter-writing Conference. Historians have generally attributed